

# ***Last Original M1s Retired from Active Duty***

The last original model of the M1 tank has been retired from duty in the active Army, an event marked by a brief ceremony at the Burke Motor Pool, Fort Knox, on September 16.

HHC, 2-81 Armor of the 1st Armor Training Brigade used this early model of the M1 to train National Guard and Reserve units. It was the last active duty unit to carry this model in its inventory.

The original M1 revolutionized the Army's combat capabilities and marked a turning point in U.S. tank development. Its most impressive feature was its special armor, a

composite "sandwich" of steel and other materials capable of defeating HEAT rounds in addition to kinetic energy penetrators. The M1 was faster and more maneuverable than its predecessors in the M60 series, while offering a lower, smaller silhouette. It was constructed of flat armor sections welded together, rather than armor castings, the method used in earlier U.S. tanks (see the Lima Army Tank Plant story on page 7, this issue).

The earliest M1s were armed with the M60's 105mm rifled cannon, a British design first adopted to the final versions of the old M48 series. Subsequent M1s were upgunned

with the German Rheinmetall smoothbore cannon of 120mm.

Another revolutionary feature of the first M1 tanks were their turbine engines, replacing the diesels that powered the M48 and M60 series tanks. The engine change, despite a penalty in fuel consumption, resulted in much quieter operation, so much so that soldiers encountering the tank in early maneuvers dubbed it "Whispering Death."

The Fort Knox armor unit's 10 M1s being retired from active duty will be rebuilt as M1A2s. Meanwhile, the unit was to receive M1A2s as replacements.